

AFRICAN TOWN

There has been false and misleading information about City Council's proposed African Town. Citizens want to know facts rather than unfair descriptions that frighten and divide people. On July 19, 2004, the City Council passed two resolutions in support of only the idea and implementation of the project. Council did not and would not agree to every detail of any expert's report. One resolution sponsored by Councilmember JoAnn Watson documents Detroit's majority African American population as an underserved group. The Council was compelled to pass this resolution with its awareness of Detroit's widespread unemployment and lack of a fair ability of Detroit citizens with exceptional ideas to secure loans at various terms and rates.

The second resolution supported the establishment of the Detroit Capital Development Corporation (DCDC), a quasi-public corporation to administer the project. A third resolution sponsored by Council member Sharon McPhail called for a "Disparity Study," corresponding with legal precedent set by past Supreme Court rulings. Had that study provided legally adequate evidence of racial disparities in city contracts and business ownership, Council may have lawfully authorized the use of Casino dollars that have been sitting unused for three years, and were set aside specifically for minorities, women and Detroit-based businesses. Those set-asides were put in place during negotiations between the Casinos and then-Mayor Dennis Archer.

On October 18, 2004, a resolution was sponsored by Councilmember Alberta Tinsley-Talabi and Council President Pro Tem Ken Cockrel that acknowledged and conceded to concerns of some citizens while reemphasizing that a Black-owned business venture is in the best interest of the city. That resolution stated in part that, "the synergy created by a business district showcasing the rich culture and significant achievements of African Americans can only improve the economic and social environment within the city of Detroit." I agreed with both, recognizing those concerns and underscoring the need. My chief concern was that their resolution abandoned critical details spelled out in the first two resolutions (including establishment of an administrative development corporation and the use of Casino dollars). Thank you for all your calls of both complaint and support. Overwhelmingly, your calls were in firm agreement. Thank you for your continuing support of my work to benefit 100% of Detroiters, and thus all Michiganders, for years to come. With any questions or concerns, please call my legislative staff person, Terry Lynn Howcott, at (313) 224-3828.



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